Species distribution in Mt. Hope Bay and Taunton River Estuary

The preliminary recommended species list presented at the first TAC meeting on March 9, 2017 contained 44 species. The list was composed of the Representative Important Species (RIS) for Brayton Point Station and the Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant; ESA listed species and species of concern present in MHB, diadromous fish, and 24 US EPA Virginia Province criteria data base species found in MHB. Some of these species overlapped (for example Winter Flounder is both a RIS for Brayton Point Station and in US EPA Virginia Province criteria data base; Table 1).

Table 1. The preliminary recommended species for the development of dissolved oxygen criteria for Mount Hope Bay and the Taunton River. The blue shading indicates species included in the Virginian Province criteria data base (Table 7 in the Material for TAC 1).

Preliminary Recommended Species			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Alewife	Alosa pseudoharengus	Naked Goby	Gobiosoma bosc
American Eel	Anguilla rostrata	Northern Pipefish	Syngnathus fuscus
American Lobster	Homarus americanus	Northern Searobin	Prionotus carolinus
American Shad	Alosa sapidissima	Quahog (Hard clam)	Mercenaria mercenaria
Atlantic Menhaden	Brevoortia tymmus	Rainbow Smelt	Osmerus mordax
Atlantic Silverside	Menidia menidia	Sand Lance	Ammodytes spp.
Atlantic Sturgeon	Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus	Sand Shrimp	Crangon septiemspinosa
Atlantic Surfelam	Spisula solidissima	Say Mud Crab	Dyspanopeus sayi
Bay Anchovy	Anchoa mitchilli	Scup	Stenotomus chrysops
Banded Killifish	Fundulus diaphanus	Seaboard Goby	Gobiosoma ginsburgi
Blueback Herring	Alosa aestivalis	Sheepshead Minnow	Cyprinodon variegatus
Blue Crab	Callinectes sapidus	Shortnose Sturgeon	Acipenser brevirostrum
Bluefish	Pomatomus saltatrix	Silver Hake	Merluccius bilinearis
Bluegill	Lepomis macrochirus	Spot	Leiostomus xanthurus
Blue Mussel	Mytilus edulis	Striped Bass	Morone saxatilis
Cancer Crab	Cancer irroratus & C. borealis	Summer Flounder	Paralichthys dentatus
Four-eye Amphipod	Ampelisca abdita	Tautog	Tautog onitis
Fourspine Stickleback	Apeltes quadmeus	Threespine Stickleback	Gasterosteus aculeatus
Green Crab	Carcinus maenas	Weakfish	Cynoscion regalis
Hogchoker	Trinectes maculatus	White Perch	Morone americana
Largemouth Bass	Micropterus salmoides	Windowpane	Scophthalmus aquosus
Longfin Squid	Loligo peali	Winter Flounder	Pseudopleuronectes americanus

Finalization of Species List and Additional Proposed Species

At the first TAC meeting the following species were requested by the members to be included in the recommended species list: Black Sea Bass, Butterfish, softshell clam, Atlantic nut shell and other missing RIS species, Atlantic Tomcod, and horseshoe crab. Several TAC members also requested several other species (sea-run brook trout, spider crab, channel whelk, knobbed whelk, mantis shrimp, and another shrimp besides *Crangon*) to be included in the list after the meeting. RIDEM provided the most substantial list for consideration containing 24 individual species (Table 2) and 5 broad species groups (pandilid shrimp, mysid shrimp, mud crab, hermit crab, and amphipod). RIDEM also recommended removing Banded Killifish from the species list.

Table 2. List of species not included in the preliminary recommended species list that RIDEM thought may be important to consider adding to the final recommended species list for Massachusetts dissolved oxygen criteria development for Mouth Hope Bay and the Taunton River. List status and comments regarding inclusion in the species list are also shown.

Common Name	Added to list	st Comments	
Atlantic Cod	Yes	Important commercial species that has shown poor population recovery	
Atlantic Herring	No	4 other species of clupeids are on the list	
Atlantic Needlefish	No	Surface-dwelling species, estuaries/coastal areas, uncommon in Mt. Hope Bay	
Cunner	No	Tautog, another w rasse species, is on the list and has DO data	
Eastern Oyster	Yes	MassGIS shellfish layer shows suitable habitat in the Taunton River, brackish waters, intertidal/subtidal areas, reef former	
Grubby	Yes	Demersal, marine/brackish, spaw ning in Mt. Hope Bay	
Hickory Shad	No	3 other <i>Alosa</i> spp. are on the list	
Inshore Lizardfish	No	Seasonally warm-water species, no spawning indicated, present	
Japanese Shore Crab	No	Invasive species, green crab is on the list and has DO data	
Little Skate	Yes	Demersal, most common skate species in Mt. Hope Bay, increasing abundance in Narragansett Bay based on URI data	
Mantis Shrimp	Yes	Overlapping TAC member request, benthic invertebrate, estuarine resident	
Mummichog	Yes	Found in the intertidal/shallow water areas, 3rd abundant species in 60-ft seine and 5th most abundant in 300-ft seine	
Ninespine Stickleback	No	2 other stickleback species are on the list and are common in our study area	
Northern Kingfish	Yes	Occurs in the complete study area, seasonal migrant, beach seine	
Northern Puffer	No	Demersal for all life stages, not very abundant or rare, no indication of a change in abundance	
Oyster Toadfish	Yes	Demersal for all life stages, estuarine resident	
Razor Clam	No	4 other bivalves are on the list, MassGIS shellfish map does not indicate habitat in our study area	
Red Hake	Yes	Demersal juvenile and adult life stages, declining abundance	
Ribbed Mussel	No	3 other intertidal/subtidal bivalves are on the list	
Smallmouth Flounder	No	4 other flounder species are on the list including Hogchoker which occurs the entire study area	
Smooth Dogfish	Yes	Pelagic, most common shark species in Mt. Hope Bay	
Spotted Hake	No	2 other gadids species are on the list	
Striped Killifish	Yes	Found in the intertidal/shallow water areas, 2nd abundant species in 60-ft seine and 3rd most abundant in 300-ft seine	
Striped Searobin	No	Northern Searobin is on the list and has DO data	

The individual species suggested by RIDEM were considered and added to the list based on habitat suitability data or requirements, life stages using the study area, abundance and or documented changes in abundance, the presence or absence of other genus or family members on the list, and the range of the study area used by the species.

The study area for marine dissolved oxygen (DO) criteria review for Mount Hope Bay and Taunton River has been defined as the portions of Mount Hope Bay that are in Massachusetts and the mainstem of the Taunton River upstream of the Taunton WWTP. Banded Killifish along with Bluegill, Largemouth Bass, and Yellow Perch have been identified as Representative Important Species for the Taunton River in the vicinity of the Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant (TMLP) by Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries. TMLP is located downstream of the Taunton WWTP. Various life stages of each of these species have also been collected at the Taunton River Desalination Plant (downstream of TMLP) during baseline studies and operational monitoring (Metcalf & Eddy and AECOM 2008, AECOM 2010). Therefore these four species have remained on the recommended species list.

Bowman et al. (2000) was reviewed for the types of prey items eaten by fishes and two common squid species off the northeastern United States. The study examined 170 predators, with 59 species feeding primarily on fish and or squid. Common fish and squid taken as prey included Northern Sand Lance, hakes, herrings, mackerels, Butterfish, anchovies, Scup, flatfish, sculpins, longfin inshore squid and northern shortfin squid. Southern New England piscivores ate Northern Sand Lance, Silver Hake, Atlantic Cod, gadids, and herrings (Bowman et al. 2000). The review indicated that the preliminary recommended species list contained a number of species that are prey items for other fish and marine mammals indicating that the DO criteria review will protect the forage base.

Inclusion of individual species

Sea – run Brook Trout: The Taunton River is reported to have populations of Brook Trout that move into the mainstem of the Taunton River which would allow access to the estuarine areas of the lower Taunton River. Fishermen have reported salter trout from the Bridgewater/Raynham Area (Hurley 2006). The Taunton River is generally a warmwater fisheries habitat, however it can support coldwater species such as Brook Trout during the cooler months (September to May) when water temperatures dip below 70-75 °F. Wild Brook Trout populations and the coldwater habitats of southeastern Massachusetts that they inhabit have been damaged by almost 400 years of development and man-made habitat modifications. When Brook Trout have access to the ocean or estuarine areas (such as the lower Taunton River), some portion of the population can enter the marine environment and become what are known as "Salters" or sea run Brook Trout (Hurley 2006).

Due to the current scarcity of sea-run brook trout, we have limited information on their life history. Generally, brook trout are a coldwater species unable to tolerate the typical summer

temperatures in ponds, large rivers and shallow estuarine areas in southeastern Massachusetts. The small first order groundwater fed headwater streams that support wild brook trout in this area offer limited space and food resources. When these streams connect to a larger habitat, such as the ocean or estuaries, some of the Brook Trout can migrate into these larger habitats when conditions are suitable and take advantage of a larger food supply growing faster and larger than resident trout (Hurley 2006). Brook Trout spawning in this region starts approximately the first week in November (range: Late October to late December) in limited stream spawning areas that contain upwelling springs and groundwater seeps with sand and gravel substrates (Hurley 2006).

The Taunton River Watershed has a handful of wild Brook Trout streams, some of which offer the potential for trout migration into the Taunton River when water conditions are suitable (Table 3). These conditions generally occur annually in late September through mid- May; isolated habitat may occur during the summer months within the mainstem at mouths of coldwater tributaries or spring holes. Two coldwater fish resources (CFR; streams) enter the Taunton River in our study area, the Segreganset River and Berkley Bridge Creek, and a third enters slightly upstream of the Taunton Wastewater Treat Plant (Coldwater Fish Resources List 2017). Twelve Brook Trout were collected at Berkley Bridge Creek - Taunton River in September 1994 (Table 3). Additionally, a Brook Trout was collected in the vicinity of the Taunton River Desalination Plant on April 26, 2007 during baseline studies although they are not typically found in this section of the River (Metcalf & Eddy and AECOM 2008). Rainfall in April 2007 was 7.92 inches, 3.76 inches above normal, with 6.75 inches falling before the sampling date (National Climate Data Center 2007, T.F. Green Airport).

TABLE IS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY - NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Table 3. Fisheries survey data from streams containing brook trout with the potential for migration into the lower Taunton River mainstem in order of increasing distance from Braga Bridge in Fall River (from Southeast District Files; taken from Hurley 2006).

Stream Name	Town	Sample Date and Location	Brook Trout (number) (size range)	Other Fish species	Fish Passage Obstructions
UT- Taunton River (Berkley Bridge Creek)	Berkley	Sept. 21, 1994 (Elm Street and Bayview)	12 (78-262 mm)	American eel (observed), white sucker (11)	None known
Clark Brook	Berkley	Sept. 21, 1994 Burt Street and Berkley Street	1 (182 mm)	American eel (common), redfin pickerel (2), white sucker (1), brown bullhead, pumpkinseed (4), tessellated darter	None known
UT-Taunton River	Raynham	June 22, 2005 Thrasher Street	16 (56-148mm)	American Eel (3)	None known
Cotley River	Taunton	08/6/1997 Hart Street (Below Barstows Pond)	1 (257 mm)	American eel (abundant), Chain pickerel (1), pumpkinseed(2), largemouth bass(2), swamp darter(1)	Barstow Pond Dam
UT-Taunton River	Raynham	June 30, 2005 Up from Hill Street	4 (86-102 mm)	American eel (7)	None known
UT-Taunton River (McGarrys Brook	Raynham	08/09/1990 (cart road N of Route 44)	30	American eel (1)	None known
Puddingshear Brook	Middleboro	09/01/1989 (Clay Street)	42	American eel (20), redfin pickerel (10), tessellated darter (33), swamp darter (3)	None known
(UT-Poquoy Brook) (Leonard Washburn Brook)	Lakeville	09/30/2002 (S. of Rte 44)	19 (73-240 mm)	American eel (4), banded sunfish (2)	None known
Bassett Brook	Raynham	July 17, 1990 Below Pine street	7 (52-196 mm)	American eel (5), redfin pickerel (5), tessellated darter (5)	None known

UT=un-named (on USGS 7.5 minute topographic maps) tributary

Sturgeon: Atlantic Sturgeon and Shortnose Sturgeon are listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) Master ESA species presence tables indicate that the lower region of the Taunton River can provide foraging habitat, wherever suitable forage is present, for subadult and adult Atlantic Sturgeon; and Narragansett Bay (throughout the bay) can provide foraging habitat, wherever suitable forage is present, for adult Shortnose Sturgeon (GARFO 2017a, b).

Historical records indicate that Atlantic Sturgeon spawned in the Taunton River to at least the turn of the century (Tracy 1905 as cited by Green et al. 2009). Buerkett and Kynard (1993) surveyed the Taunton River for both Atlantic and Shortnose Sturgeon in 1991 and 1992 using gill nets set from Mount Hope Bay to river mile 21. Three Atlantic Sturgeons were collected. All three fish were in poor condition and the authors concluded that they were strays probably originating from the Hudson River. Buerkett and Kynard (1993) concluded that the Taunton River was unlikely to have a spawning population of Atlantic Sturgeon. Buerkett and Kynard (1993) is the only documented record of sturgeon of either species in the Taunton River in recent years. A fisherman in June 2004 fishing in Rhode Island state waters noted that the first three fathoms of towed gear held three juvenile Atlantic or Shortnose Sturgeons (Anoushian 2004). Two Atlantic Sturgeons have been collected by RIDEM Trawl Survey since 1997; one captured in Narragansett Bay in 1997 measured 85 cm TL and the other captured in Rhode Island Sound in October 2005 measured 130 cm TL (Greene et al. 2009). The NMFS observer program has also documented Atlantic Sturgeon by catch in federal waters off the coast of Rhode Island (Greene et al. 2009). Acoustic tagging studies in other areas have raised questions about the efficiency of trawls and other past method in collecting and detecting sturgeons in rivers. Currently Massachusetts DMF does not maintain any acoustic receivers in the Taunton River (personal communication Michael Bednarski, MA DMF May 2015).

Older juvenile and adult Atlantic and Shortnose Sturgeon are known to inhabit low-salinity and marine areas (Greene et al. 2009, Fernandes et al. 2010, Zydlewski et al. 2011). Juvenile Shortnose Sturgeon have been shown to be quite sensitive to low DO in acute tests at low salinities (Campbell and Goodman 2004). Negative effects of hypoxia on juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon survival and growth have also been shown (Secor and Gunderson 1998).

Final Recommended Species List

Table 4 show the species that have been added to the initial preliminary species list during the first TAC meeting (brownish-red species) and requested by TAC members and to be considered by RIDEM during the follow-up period (red species). Table 5 shows the final version of the recommended species list. The final list contains 68 taxa.

Table 4. Recommended species for the development of dissolved oxygen criteria for Mount Hope Bay and the Taunton River. The brownish-red species were suggested at the first TAC meeting. The red species are those that were suggested by TAC members and RIDEM after the first TAC meeting. The blue shading indicates species included in the Virginian Province criteria data base.

Recommended Species			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Alewife	Alosa pseudoharengus	Mantis Shrimp	Squilla empusa
American Eel	Anguilla rostrata	Mummichog	Fundulus heteroclitus
American Lobster	Homarus americanus	Mysid Shrimp	Mysidae
American Shad	Alosa sapidissima	Naked Goby	Gobiosoma bosc
Atlantic Cod	Gadus morhua	Northern Kingfish	Menticirrhus saxatilis
Atlantic Menhaden	Brevoortia tyramus	Northern Pipefish	Syngnathus fuscus
Atlantic Nut Shell	Nucula spp.	Northern Searobin	Prionotus carolinus
Atlantic Silverside	Menidia menidia	Oyster Toadfish	Opsanus tau
Atlantic Sturgeon	Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus	Quahog (Hard clam)	Mercenaria mercenaria
Atlantic Surfelam	Spisula solidissima	Rainbow Smelt	Osmerus mordax
Atlantic Tomcod	Microgadus tomcod	Red Hake	Urophycis chuss
Banded Killifish	Fundulus diaphanus	Sand Lance	Ammodytes spp.
Bay Anchovy	Anchoa mitchilli	Sand Shrimp	Crangon septiemspinosa
Black Sea Bass	Centropristis striata	Say Mud Crab	Dyspanopeus sayi
Blue Crab	Callinectes sapidus	Scup	Stenotomus chrysops
Blue Mussel	Mytilus edulis	Seaboard Goby	Gobiosoma ginsburgi
Blueback Herring	Alosa aestivalis	Sheepshead Minnow	Cyprinodon variegatus
Bluefish	Pomatomus saltatrix	Shortnose Sturgeon	Acipenser brevirostrum
Bluegill	Lepomis macrochirus	Silver Hake	Merluccius bilinearis
Brook Trout (sea-run)	Salvelinus fontinalis	Smooth Dogfish	Mustelus canis
Butterfish	Peprilus triacanthus	Softshell Clam	Mya arenaria
Cancer Crab	Cancer irroratus & C. borealis	Spider Crab	Libinia emarginata
Channeled Whelk	Busycotypus canalictulatus	Spot	Leiostomus xanthurus
Eastern Oyster	Crassostrea virginica	Striped Bass	Morone saxatilis
Four-eye Amphipod	Ampelisca abdita	Striped Killifish	Fundulus majalis
Fourspine Stickleback	Apeltes quadracus	Summer Flounder	Paralichthys dentatus
Green Crab	Carcinus maenas	Tautog	Tautog onitis
Grubby	Myoxocephalus aeneus	Threespine Stickleback	Gasterosteus aculeatus
Hogchoker	Trinectes maculatus	Tube Worm	Mediomastus ambiseta
Horseshoe Crab	Limulus polyphemus	Weakfish	Cynoscion regalis
Knobbed Whelk	Busycon carica	White Perch	Morone americana
Largemouth Bass	Micropterus salmoides	Window pane	Scophthalmus aquosus
Little Skate	Leucoraja erinacea	Winter Flounder	Pseudopleuronectes americanus
Longfin Squid	Loligo peali	Yellow Perch	Perca flavescens

Table 5. Recommended species for the development of dissolved oxygen criteria for Mount Hope Bay and the Taunton River. The blue shading indicates species included in the Virginian Province criteria data base.

Recommended Species			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Alewife	Alosa pseudoharengus	Mantis Shrimp	Squilla empusa
American Eel	Anguilla rostrata	Mummichog	Fundulus heteroclitus
American Lobster	Homarus americanus	Mysid Shrimp	Mysidae
American Shad	Alosa sapidissima	Naked Goby	Gobiosoma bosc
Atlantic Cod	Gadus morhua	Northern Kingfish	Menticirrhus saxatilis
Atlantic Menhaden	Brevoortia tyrannus	Northern Pipefish	Syngnathus fuscus
Atlantic Nut Shell	Nucula spp.	Northern Searobin	Prionotus carolinus
Atlantic Silverside	Menidia menidia	Oyster Toadfish	Opsanus tau
Atlantic Sturgeon	Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus	Quahog (Hard clam)	Mercenaria mercenaria
Atlantic Surfclam	Spisula solidissima	Rainbow Smelt	Osmerus mordax
Atlantic Tomcod	Microgadus tomcod	Red Hake	Urophycis chuss
Banded Killifish	Fundulus diaphanus	Sand Lance	Ammodytes spp.
Bay Anchovy	Anchoa mitchilli	Sand Shrimp	Crangon septienspinosa
Black Sea Bass	Centropristis striata	Say Mud Crab	Dyspanopeus sayi
Blue Crab	Callinectes sapidus	Scup	Stenotomus chrysops
Blue Mussel	Mytilus edulis	Seaboard Goby	Gobiosoma ginsburgi
Blueback Herring	Alosa aestivalis	Sheepshead Minnow	Cyprinodon variegatus
Bluefish	Pomatomus saltatrix	Shortnose Sturgeon	Acipenser brevirostrum
Bluegill	Lepomis macrochirus	Silver Hake	Merluccius bilinearis
Brook Trout (sea-run)	Salvelinus fontinalis	Smooth Dogfish	Mustelus canis
Butterfish	Peprilus triacanthus	Softshell Clam	Mya arenaria
Cancer Crabs	Cancer irroratus & C. borealis	Spider Crab	Libinia emarginata
Channeled Whelk	Busycotypus canalictulatus	Spot	Leiostomus xanthurus
Eastern Oyster	Crassostrea virginica	Striped Bass	Morone saxatilis
Four-eye Amphipod	Ampelisca abdita	Striped Killifish	Fundulus majalis
Fourspine Stickleback	Apeltes quadracus	Summer Flounder	Paralichthys dentatus
Green Crab	Carcinus maenas	Tautog	Tautog onitis
Grubby	Myoxocephalus aeneus	Threespine Stickleback	Gasterosteus aculeatus
Hogchoker	Trinectes maculatus	Tube Worm	Mediomastus ambiseta
Horseshoe Crab	Limulus polyphemus	Weakfish	Cynoscion regalis
Knobbed Whelk	Busycon carica	White Perch	Morone americana
Largemouth Bass	Micropterus salmoides	Windowpane	Scophthalmus aquosus
Little Skate	Leucoraja erinacea	Winter Flounder	Pseudopleuronectes americanus
Longfin Squid	Loligo peali	Yellow Perch	Perca flavescens

Updated Table 5: Representative Important Species (RIS) developed for Brayton Point Station, Taunton River Desalination Plant, and Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant.

Representative Important Species			
Brayton Point Station	Taunton River	Taunton Municipal	
Brayton Point Station	Desalination Plant	Lighting Plant	
Alewife	Alewife	Alewife	
Altantic Menhaden	Altantic Menhaden	Altantic Menhaden	
American Sand Lance	American Eel	American Shad	
Atlantic Nutworm	American Shad	Banded Killifish	
Atlantic Silverside	Blueback herring	Blue Crab	
Bay Anchovy	Rainbow Smelt	Blueback Herring	
Blue Mussel	White Perch	Bluegill	
Bluefish		Hogchoker	
Eelgrass		Largemouth Bass	
Four-eye Amphipod		Threespine Stickleback	
Hogchoker		White Perch	
Quahog		Yellow Perch	
Rainbow Smelt			
Scup			
Seaboard Goby			
Silver Hake			
Striped Bass			
Tautog			
Threespine Stickleback			
Tube Worm			
Weakfish			
White Perch			
Windowpane			
Winter Flounder			

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